



Community Center Questions and Answers

Updated August 23, 2016

Community Center Task Force

This document captures questions raised during Community Center Task Force meetings and provides answers from various sources. The questions are organized into two categories: Fact-seeking questions and future discussion questions. Answers to the fact-seeking questions can be found below. They are grouped by major categories of interest. The future discussion questions are included at the end of the document and will be addressed as part of the task force process.

Fact-Seeking Questions

Creekside Community Center Building Assessment

Q1 If we keep the existing Creekside building as a community center, what programs or activities can be added after upgrades are complete?

The “upgrades” listed in the 2015 HGA Needs Assessment are related to long-term maintenance needs. These include a new sprinkler system, restroom renovation, window replacement, new HVAC/cooling systems, new fire alarm system, miscellaneous electrical upgrades and parking lot renovation. These upgrades would not add additional space to the current building nor enhance its functionality for more programs and activities. As the HGA Needs Assessment notes, the building itself limits opportunities for the City to better meet the needs of its residents. HGA found that the structure, while sound, is very inflexible. The concrete block walls make it difficult to move interior partitions and to provide appropriate ceiling heights for the functions that Creekside now hosts. This lack of flexibility to modify room sizes and heights prevents the facility from being able to adequately expand its current slate of programs and activities.

Q2 What is the ongoing cost of the current building for upkeep, operations and maintenance and what is its efficiency?

The City budgeted \$11.94 per square foot in 2016 for operating and maintaining City office buildings. Creekside expenditures for 2015 for operation and maintenance of the building were

\$25.86 per square foot – double the average cost. Creekside is considered to be one of the least energy-efficient buildings of the buildings owned by the City of Bloomington. In a recent study of City buildings conducted by VFA, Inc., a facilities capital planning and asset management company, Creekside ranked among the worst (second from the bottom) for energy utilization and at the bottom for facility condition. The funding needed over the next 20 years to keep Creekside in just its current condition is estimated at \$8,750,000.

Q3 Is it worth it to spend \$4 million on maintenance and repairs to the existing Creekside Community Center or invest this money into a new community center?

Given the findings of its needs assessment process as well as the lack of flexibility to modify room sizes and heights plus the significant cost to correct existing problems, HGA recommended that the City should look for a new location to accommodate its community center programming needs. HGA noted that this would allow the new facility to be right-sized, accessible, energy-efficient and purpose-built for the long-term benefit of the community. In addition, a recent study on the condition and energy efficiency of City buildings found that Creekside rated as unsatisfactory for both facility condition and energy use intensity. Investing approximately \$4 million on maintenance and repairs to Creekside would not enhance its functionality or flexibility to add new programming.

Q4 What are the space deficiencies in Creekside Community Center? The photos in the HGA needs assessment report are not clear.

HGA documented a number of space deficiencies within Creekside Community Center. Overcrowding is commonly experienced in the large, multi-purpose room known as the Minnesota Valley Room, particularly during monthly senior lunch program events. Overcrowding is also routinely found in the billiards room and hallways before the weekday noon and evening meal programs. This overcrowding limits maneuverability, particularly for patrons using wheelchairs or walkers. In addition, there is inadequate space for music and fitness classes as well as for community center storage. As a result, Creekside does not have the capacity to adequately handle its current programs much less add more programs and services.

Q5 How safe is Creekside Community Center?

Creekside met all building and safety codes at the time of its construction in 1960. While, the building does not meet current and building safety codes, it is still considered a safe facility – just not as safe as a new building would be. Creekside is made of non-combustible construction, but without structure fireproofing or a sprinkler system. In 1981, the building was remodeled to provide code-compliant egress to meet the code for a community/recreation assembly purpose. The HGA Needs Assessment reports that there is a minimal fire alarm system in the building with limited automatic notification and manual system. Parts are no longer manufactured for the system, nor is it code compliant. In addition, Creekside is not sprinklered for fire protection.

HGA recommended that the fire alarm system should be replaced with the equipment that is in compliance with current codes. If upgrades such as a new HVAC system and restroom expansions were made to the building, the building would have to make changes meet current building and safety codes.

Q6 What is the lifespan of the critical infrastructure in Creekside?

The HGA Needs Assessment noted that many of Creekside's HVAC components have long surpassed the end of their useful life and need replacement. Specifically, the Minnesota Valley Room's air handling unit, chiller, fan-coil cooling units and unit ventilators are all 40 years old or older. These systems need to be significantly upgraded to overcome critical shortcomings and to comply with current ventilation codes and standards. The boilers on the heating system were installed in 1990 and may have 5-10 years of useful life remaining. In addition, the chiller on the cooling system is 39 years old and has experienced compressor failures in recent years. Replacement parts are difficult to find. The existing electrical system is in fair condition, but it operates near load to serve current needs. In addition, the building's service equipment is an original Federal Pacific Electric (FPE) circuit breaker panel. FPE circuit breakers are known for not tripping under short circuits and are considered unsafe. HGA has recommended replacing the panel as a maintenance item.

Q7 What is the operating budget for Creekside Community Center?

Revenues for Creekside in 2015 were \$101,188. 2015 expenditures totaled \$537,188. This included expenditures directly related to operating Creekside related to staffing, materials and supplies, maintenance and repairs, training, furniture replacement and internal charges for space and occupancy, computer network and mailroom usage. The 2015 operating budget noted above does not include revenues and expenditures for Human Services programs, services or events.

Market Analysis

Q1 What works in other communities when it comes to community centers?

Community centers in other cities typically include amenities such as gymnasiums, fitness centers, walking/running tracks, aquatics facilities, indoor playgrounds, ice rinks, multi-purpose/banquet space, meeting rooms and classrooms.

Q2 What is the saturation point of facilities and needs related to competition and market share?

Ballard*King and Associates found that Bloomington's population is more than adequate to support a comprehensive community center. The ability of a community center to capture market share is based on the number and variety of its amenities, the facility size and the fees

charged. Currently there is no comprehensive public community center in Bloomington. There are a number of private service fitness providers in Bloomington, but at least two have closed since the HGA Needs Assessment was issued in early 2015. Ballard*King noted that public community center facilities operate on an “ala carte system” of programming beyond sports and fitness that greatly expands their market to a broader spectrum of users. As a result, Ballard*King maintained that 20% to 30% market penetration rate is obtainable. In fact, the firm noted that over the course of a year’s time, more than 50% of a community’s population may come to a community center for some use, function or activity.

Q3 What are the Bloomington-specific needs for a community center?

Bloomington’s specific needs for a community center were spelled out in the HGA Needs Assessment. HGA interviewed a number of stakeholders representing youth groups, senior programs at Creekside, athletic organizations, the School District and Creekside user and rental groups. The existing programming at Creekside is very robust, drawing 115,710 users in 2015. However, the lack of flexibility in the current structure has limited programming and compromised offerings. HGA found that a new community center could expand the user base and reach a broader demographic. One of the most frequently heard comments during the stakeholder interviews was the need for more gymnasium space. School District staff reported that the demand by local youth athletic organizations for gym space in their Activity Centers at Jefferson and Kennedy high schools often exceeds their supply. As a result, the HGA report recommended a large gymnasium space with at least three full-sized basketball courts that could also accommodate other sports such as volleyball and pickleball. Other Bloomington-specific needs as reported in the HGA needs assessment included an indoor walking/jogging track, indoor playground, large multi-purpose space and meeting rooms/classrooms that could be used for a wide variety of programming needs.

Q4 How long are people staying in Bloomington?

The most recent National Citizen Survey™ of Bloomington residents in 2015 reported the following regarding length of residency:

Less than 2 years:	15%
2-5 years:	14%
6-10 years:	15%
11-20 years:	16%
More than 20 years:	40%

Q5 What are the age and income breakdowns of other community centers compared to Bloomington?

The following data is for each community is based on information from the U.S. Census for 2014:

City	Median Age	Median Household Income
Bloomington	42.8	\$63,053
Eagan	37.3	\$80,247
Eden Prairie	37.9	\$95,697
Maple Grove	38.2	\$92,267

Approximately 39% of Creekside Community Center’s annual visitors are Senior Program users. The remaining 61% are Human Services community program participants and rental users. Community programs include Loaves and Fishes, Fare For All, Homework Connection and free phone distribution. Three churches rent space at Creekside.

Information on age and income breakdowns was requested from the community centers in Eagan, Eden Prairie and Maple Grove. The City of Eagan reported that given the indoor playground and senior center their community center, they see users young and old in the building. The estimated average age of the Eagan Community Center’s fitness patrons is late 40’s to early 50’s. The fitness center reportedly serves an older user group because it does not have childcare drop-off for members or an indoor swimming pool that would attract younger families.

Q6 How do we find out about the unique needs of Bloomington?

The first step in defining the needs for a new community center was the needs assessment conducted by HGA Architects in 2014-2015. Based on its research with community stakeholders and City staff, HGA established a project vision to ensure that future explorations of building space programs and design grew of Bloomington’s unique character and goals for the future. The following principles acknowledged that the Bloomington community center would be a success if it incorporated the following elements:

- Attracting multi-generational, multi-cultural and multi-economic users.
- Comfortable and welcoming.
- Human services and recreation focused.
- Accessible.
- Providing appropriate balance of technology, programs and human interaction.
- “One stop shop” – walk in and access multiple programs serving multiple cultures; long-term and lifelong Bloomington residents feel welcome and served.
- Central and accessible – the location of the existing Community Center is important; current city Civic Plaza is seen as central and accessible.

In 2015, the City Council directed that a Community Center Task Force be established to study the issue and provide the Council with a framework for helping them to make decisions

regarding the potential future of a new facility. The City Council specifically appointed representatives of the major user groups (e.g., youth, seniors, etc.) in the hopes that they would articulate and advocate for their own unique needs in a community center.

It is possible that additional research could be conducted, such as random sample, scientific surveys or less formal, online polls. An informal poll of Bloomington's high school students is attached. Other sources for information on Bloomington's needs could include open houses and focus groups with specific audiences (e.g., multi-cultural communities.)

Q7 Are we looking to meet the needs of future or current residents or be an attractor for younger families?

The answer is "yes" to all of the above. A new community center would be right-sized and purpose-built to meet the needs of residents both now and into the future. Creekside is undersized to accommodate current community center program demands in Bloomington. The City cannot offer the programming desired by its residents due to the lack of space and flexibility in the current facility. A vibrant community center could improve the quality of life in Bloomington and help to serve as an attractor for younger families as well as older residents alike.

Q8 What kind of space is available to build this type of facility in Bloomington?

The HGA needs assessment recommended a building of 94,715 square feet that would include three gymnasiums, large multipurpose room, meeting rooms, indoor playground, fitness areas, and office space. The minimum requirement for a building of this size with adequate parking would be approximately eight to ten acres. HGA estimated that an aquatics facility would increase the size of the building by another 20,500 square feet. The current Creekside Community Center site is 4.74 acres, too small to accommodate a larger building and the parking required. Site considerations include central location, access to transit and accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists. The City Council has requested that the task force study site alternatives as part of its assessment process.

Community Center Funding

Q1 What is the funding source for construction of a community center?

There are several potential sources for funding the construction of a community center. One source is a bond referendum. In a bond referendum, voters are given the opportunity via a ballot measure to approve a proposed issue of municipal securities for the purpose of constructing a public facility. This is considered a pure general obligation bond, meaning it is 100% supported by taxes and the City Council pledges the full faith and credit of the City. Interest rate on the debt is the lowest in the market at time of issuance.

Another financing option is lease revenue bonds. This form of long-term borrowing is commonly used to finance public facilities, including community centers. The City's Port Authority would be the issuer of the bonds and the City the lessee for a specific project (revenues to support the debt service on the bonds are lease payments to the Port Authority.) As this is a revenue bond, the interest rate will be higher. Since the requirement for annual appropriations for lease revenue bonds does not treat them as debt, there is no need for voter approval.

A third potential funding source is charter bonds. By a vote of 5 of its members, the City Council can adopt a resolution to authorize the issuance of general obligation bonds that pledge the full faith and credit and taxing powers of the city. Interest rate on the debt is the lowest in the market at time of issuance. The general obligation bonds can be issued on such terms and conditions the Council determines, without obtaining the approval of a majority of the electors voting on the question of issuing such bonds. The City can pledge to the payment of the general obligation bonds any other available revenues or assets of the City. General obligation bonds can be issued for a public purpose to finance any capital improvement and related costs including, but not limited to, interest on the bonds, the costs of feasibility studies, design, and plans and specifications, publication costs, costs of issuance and other capital costs of any capital improvement.

Other potential funding sources include the sale of the existing property at Creekside, setting up a building replacement fund and savings.

Q2 What works in other communities from a fiscal standpoint in terms of operations?

Many communities consider their community centers to be business-type activities. As such, these facilities are expected to cover most of their costs with user fees and charges. Some cities absorb a portion of their community centers' costs within their General Fund budgets or subsidize them with property taxes and other forms of funding. Typical forms of revenue generated by community centers include admission fees, membership passes, program charges, facility and equipment rentals, advertising, merchandise sales, sponsorships, naming rights, grants and donations.

Q3 What are potential revenue sources?

Potential revenue sources for a community center are listed in the previous question.

Q4 How will the community center generate income?

The income generated by community centers is noted in question #10. ???

Q5 What areas within a community center generate the most revenue? What areas cost the most to operate?

Fitness memberships and related activities such as fitness classes and training tend to generate the most revenue. Room rental for banquets, events and meetings can also produce significant revenues. As HGA noted in its needs assessment, aquatics facilities are the most expensive component to construct and operate within a community center.

Q6 Member-based vs. program-based fees – what is the best model of operation?

The preferred model for operation of a community center appears to be a combination of both member-based and program-based fees, depending on the activity. The revenue projection model developed by HGA included a combination of daily admission fees, annual passes, room rental charges, program fees, fitness class charges, special event fees and birthday parties. The key is balancing accessibility while bringing in enough revenue to cover much of a community center's costs. The majority of municipally-run community centers require some form of tax subsidies to cover their operational costs. Fees may include a sliding fee scale, variable pricing for programs and activities depending upon a customer's ability to pay.

Q7 Are the membership fees listed for the community centers monthly fees or annual fees?

Most community centers offer a mix of monthly and annual membership fees as well as daily and weekly passes for their fitness centers, aquatics, gymnasiums and other amenities.

Q8 How much of the fees in other community centers are going toward the total cost of operations and how else are the operations funded?

Generally all of the fees in community centers go toward the cost of operations. As noted earlier, community center operations are funded through a variety of sources as detailed in question #10.

According to the general manager of the Eagan Community Center, 100% of the fees they charge go toward operations. While the cost of the construction was covered through a bond referendum, the ongoing costs of operations were set up as an enterprise fund. Thus, the facility needs to generate revenue to cover its costs. The community center comes close to breaking even but typically has a shortfall that is covered by an internal transfer of antenna revenue the City of Eagan receives from cell phone towers.

All fees charged at the Maple Grove Community Center also are directed toward operations of the facility. Revenues were \$460,616 less than expenditures in 2015.

Q9 What are the pros and cons of a private partnership?

With public resources increasingly in short supply to fulfill the social and physical needs of a community, partnerships between public and private entities are becoming increasingly common as governments look for support from other sectors. The pros of public/private partnerships include efficiency, access to additional revenue, potential to increase the level of service, streamlined operations, possible cost savings by pooling financial resources, diversification of programming and access to expertise and skill-sets.

The cons of public/private partnerships can include reduced flexibility and control, restrictions on programming and services offered by the public entity due to non-compete agreements with the private partner, considerable negative financial impacts in case the partnership has to be cancelled, possible transfer of risks from the private sector to the public sector (e.g., bankruptcy), uncertainties that may develop over the life of a 20, 30 or 40-year agreement and the private partner's preference for the economic aspects of a community center over the social, environmental or other aspects.

Q10 Would programming in a new community center be volunteer or staff driven?

Staffing in a new community center would probably be a combination of employee and volunteer driven, depending on the programming type. Senior programs would likely continue to be heavily volunteer-driven, while potential new amenities such as aquatics and fitness would require staffing by employees due to the nature of these activities.

Community Center Amenities***Q1 What were the existing amenities in each community when they decided to build a community center and how did they factor in the decision-making process of the current amenities?***

Information was requested from the community centers in Eagan, Eden Prairie and Maple Grove. In Eagan, the community center manager is not exactly sure what the available amenities were prior to opening in regards to banquet spaces but he believes private golf course and hotels did have banquet space. Regarding fitness facilities, Life Time Fitness and YMCA were the local options, and they were located in a different part of Eagan than the current community center. Eagan Community Center opened in 2003, prior to Anytime Fitness, Snap Fitness, Fitness 19, Planet Fitness and the niche studios that now exist. Other factors that led to the construction of a community center were the inclusion of an indoor playground, senior center and teen center which led to a full integration of community facilities. The fitness center/gyms and rental spaces provides additional options for these users and other residents/non-residents. The basketball courts give opportunities for drop-in activities for anyone to pay and play, accommodate local youth athletic associations for practices and tournaments and supply space for large-scale events.

In Maple Grove, the schools were the facilities available to the public via community education or parks and recreation programs when the community center was built twenty years ago. Maple Grove modeled their community center after the Chaska Community Center. The City Council and Park Board chose to have the private sector offer the fitness component.

Q2 What areas within a community center generate the most use? What areas generate the least use?

The most frequently used amenities within community centers generally tend to be gymnasiums, pools, fitness centers, meeting rooms, banquet/large multi-purpose rooms. Areas that provide memberships such as fitness centers have a reliable number of users that utilize the facilities on a regular basis. Areas that tend to generate the least use are child watch programs for fitness facilities and teen centers.

Q3 What is the definition of a community center vs. an activity center?

A community center is a place where people congregate for social, recreational, cultural and educational activities. Community centers typically serve as one-stop shops connecting community members to services. People gather for group activities, social support, public meetings, volunteer activities and a variety of other reasons. The goals of a community center typically include:

- Enhanced physical and mental well-being.
- Provision of recreational, educational and cultural opportunities.
- Stimulating and nurturing environment for all residents.
- Focal point for civic pride.

An activity or recreation center is narrower in its scope. It is typically a place where people can work out, play sports and participate in physical activity. Activity/recreation centers can also serve as social hubs for some people.

Q4 What are the existing alternative amenities such as the high school activity centers and is a need still unmet?

The existing amenities in Bloomington that meet social, recreational, educational and cultural needs for the general community are listed on the attached map of community amenities.

Specifically, the activity centers at Jefferson and Kennedy high schools provide 150,000 square feet of recreational space for community use. Each activity center offers a variety of fitness equipment, amenities and classes including:

- 5 gym courts
- 1/7-mile indoor running track
- Fitness/weight room
- Team meeting room

- Adult locker rooms with showers
- Dance studio (Jefferson) Wrestling rooms (Kennedy)
- Concession stand (Kennedy)

According to the Bloomington School District, the level of usage fluctuates with the seasons. The highest usage is in the winter months. During the month of June, there are approximately 900 individuals participating in the program. That number increases to approximately 1,400 in mid-January. People can purchase monthly or annual memberships and can use both Kennedy and Jefferson. Members have access to activity center facilities during non-school hours seven days per week (excluding certain holidays). Members can also use the facilities during the school day with high school physical education students.

Another aspect of the high school activity centers is gym rental. Many community groups use the gym courts for practices or games. They are the sites of many fundraising tournaments and are usually very busy on most weekends throughout the year.

Q5 Is the Bloomington Art Center at capacity and is there a need for additional space?

Portions of the Bloomington Center for the Arts are close to capacity. The Schneider Theater is nearly fully scheduled on the evenings and weekends between performances, rehearsals, set-up and breakdowns. To some extent, the Black Box Theater is also approaching capacity. Storage space is very limited in the Center for the Arts, and sometime restricts full usage of the facility. On the other hand, there is less demand for the classroom space on the second floor of the Center for the Arts.

Q6 What is the usage of the Edinborough facility in Edina?

The City of Edina supplied the following usage data for Edinborough Park. The following stats for Adventure Peak indoor playground were for the period from 8/1/15 to 6/30/16:

- Annual memberships to Adventure Peak : 332
- Member Check-ins 11,225
- Paid Daily Admissions 72,123
- Paid Daily Admissions – Groups 5,568
- **Total check-ins/admissions 88,916**
- Approximately 1,200 birthday parties at 20 people each year totaling 24,000 guests.

Q7 Who offers yoga/Pilate's classes in Bloomington?

There are several facilities that specifically offer yoga and Pilate's classes in Bloomington. The facilities have been added to the attached map of community amenities in Bloomington. In addition, Bloomington-Richfield Community Education offers beginning, intermediate and chair yoga in the schools. Yoga classes are also offered in the high school activity centers.

Q8 What are the demographics of Bloomington in terms of ethnic groups?

The following demographic breakdown for Bloomington comes from the 2010 US Census:

White alone	79.7%
Black or African American alone	7.2%
Hispanic or Latino	6.8%
Asian alone	5.9%
American Indian & Alaska Native alone	0.4%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	0.1%
Two or more races	3.1%

Note: Total exceeds 100% as respondents could choose more than one option.

Maps that depict the racial distribution of Bloomington's population are attached.

According to information supplied by the School District, the percentage of ethnic diversity in the school population was 48% in October 2015. The minority groups with the highest enrollment were Black, Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander. The greatest amount of ethnic diversity can be found at Valley View Elementary and Middle schools, Washburn Elementary and Indian Mounds Elementary. More than 50 languages are spoken in Bloomington's schools. Twenty percent of the school district's minority population are English learner students. More data can be found in the attached Enrollment Report 2015 from the School District.

Q9 What is the median age, income and comparative data for other cities that have community centers in the metro area?

Attached is a spreadsheet of community centers in the metro area listing the size of each facility and amenities as well as community demographic data.

Community Center Construction***Q1 What is the time frame for a community center project?***

It is anticipated that given the number of steps required for planning, design, funding and construction, it could take between three to five years before a community center is built and operational.

Q2 What are the largest pieces of land that the City owns?

A map showing all City-owned property is attached. Locations and details about the City's park and recreational properties can be found at:

<https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/locations-parks-and-recreational-facilities>

Community Center Site Alternatives

Q1 How big is the parcel at Creekside Community Center, including the ball field, but without the stub along Newton Avenue south of the baseball diamond?

The Creekside Community Center and Creekside Park parcel, including the ball field, is 7.29 acres.

Q2 What is the size of the Newton Avenue "stub" just south of the baseball diamond at Creekside Park?

The "stub" along Newton Avenue south of the baseball diamond belongs to Creekside Park and totals 1.40 acres.

Q3 What is the size of the new Normandale College parking ramp?

Normandale's newest parking ramp along Collegeview Road is 61,330 square feet or 1.41 acres.

Q4 How big is the triangular parcel that includes St. Luke's Lutheran Church and Mt. Olivet Rolling Acres Mental Health Services?

The triangular parcel that includes St. Luke's Lutheran Church and Mt. Olivet Rolling Acres is 6.67 acres.

Q5 How big is the community garden and parking lot located on the north end of Harrison Picnic Grounds?

The community garden plot and parking lot on the north end of Harrison Park totals 1.72 acres.

Future Discussion Questions

Q1 What works and what doesn't work in a typical community center?

Q2 What is really wanted in a community center in Bloomington?

Q3 Will the facility be focused on banquet rentals or programs?

Q4 Who might be willing to donate as a sponsor?

Q5 Will the current users continue to use the facility if the operations include fee based activities and usage?

Q6 Should the community center include a food aspect such as a café or coffee shop?

Q7 What is eminent domain and how does it work?

Q8 What are the demographics for each potential site within two miles?